

Lancaster District Fair Work Charter



Introduction



Lancaster City Council is committed to building the long-term environmental, economic, and community success and resilience of our district.

However, this can only be achieved through the collected efforts of the council, local employers, institutions, and industries working together to deliver on the many opportunities on offer to ensure our district continues to prosper in the face of continued economic challenges.

Our shared experience of working in partnership has provided a strong basis already and ensures we can pursue further opportunities to achieve economic and social recovery and renewal.

A key theme of the Council Plan for 2024–2027 is for the district is to take a Community Wealth-Building (Morecambe Bay Model) approach to building a sustainable and just local economy that benefits people and organisations.

This means redirecting flows of wealth into the local economy, so that workers, residents, and consumers benefit from the economic activity happening in their communities.

This will ensure better paid, more secure jobs and more locally rooted businesses that share the wealth they create.

There are several Community Wealth-Building initiatives in the pipeline, which focus on providing support for businesses and organisations. This includes taking a proactive approach to growing the social economy, developing grassroots initiatives with SMEs, and encouraging the growth of 'green' businesses.

As part of this work the council is launching a Fair Work Charter to help reduce inequalities within the local labour market by promoting equal and fair employment practices.

The Charter will also encourage the provision of welcoming and accessible workplaces where all workers are treated with dignity and respect, to enable them to flourish and contribute to the wider community.

Another key aim is to work with employers across the district to encourage and support efforts to make the district a net zero carbon economy and the benefits it will bring, both socially and for the local economy. Lancaster City Council advocates five elements of Fair Work – as set out in this document – that should be supported by local businesses and organisations in their employment practices to create a Fair Work District for all.

We want to celebrate great employers within the Lancaster district and drive positive change. We encourage all organisations and businesses across the public, private and third sector within the Lancaster district, regardless of size or sector to start their Fair Work Charter journey.

We recognise the financial challenges currently facing businesses and organisations. We can confirm that there will be no cost to join, and that support and advice will be provided free of charge.

Why Should Businesses Commit to Their Own Charter Journey?

There are many benefits for businesses who choose to start their Fair Work Charter journey.

All businesses will be provided with details of their Fair Work Charter status. This will enable them to showcase their business as a Fair Work Employer.

Those employers who already have good employment practices under each of the elements can get the recognition they deserve for these practices, and the relevant publicity for their actions, to be a good employer. Those who want to improve their employment practices and address inequalities can do so through a framework supported by fellow businesses and anchor institutions.

By progressing through the Charter, businesses can become employers of choice.

Being able to recruit and retain high value staff can lead to a competitive advantage through increases in innovation and productivity.

Being committed to the charter allows businesses to access networks, support and signposting to enable charter implementation and achievement of member status.

Once assessment has taken place, we would encourage employers to continue on their journey and look to meet more criteria within each element. Businesses are recognised as contributing to social value through paying a real living wage and applying the other elements of the charter.

They will therefore be better able to provide social value related evidence when tendering for business from the council and other organisations who have this approach when procuring local goods and services.

The charter allows businesses to have a positive impact on their locality, specific to the economic regeneration of the Lancaster district. Employers with a commitment to corporate social responsibility will reap the benefits of attracting skilled talent to remain in the area rather than them commuting out for employment.

Five Elements of Fair Work

Lancaster City Council advocates the following five elements of Fair Work that should be supported by local businesses in their employment practices to create a fair work district for all.

1. Fair Pay and Job Security
2. Employee Voice and Good Employee Relations
3. Health, Safety and Wellbeing
4. Flexibility, Diversity and Equality
5. Development and Fulfilment

1. Fair Pay and Job Security

Fair Pay

To ensure the financial resilience of our district's working population and payment of a wage commensurate with the cost of living, employers should achieve or have a plan in place to pay their staff a real living wage. Consideration should also be given to planning to ensure that third party contracted staff are also paid the real living wage.

The real Living Wage is voluntarily paid by employers and is the only wage rate which is based on what people need to live. It is applicable to those 18 years or older and is based on a calculation made according to the cost of living, based on a 'basket' of household goods and services.

We support apprenticeships and the value they provide to employers and apprentices. It is not a requirement that apprentices are paid the real Living Wage, as it is recognised that apprentice wages are lower as a contribution to the cost of training. It is good practice to ensure that pay rises over the course of the apprenticeship and employers are encouraged to extend the living wage to apprentices.

Payment of the real Living Wage to all employees regardless of contractual status is a huge step forwards to eradicating in-work poverty in our district.

Employers can also look to provide stability and security for workers now and in the future by becoming a Living Pension employer. This is a voluntary savings target for employers, to help workers build up a pension pot that will provide enough income to meet basic everyday needs in retirement.

Job Security

Employers can support job security in their organisation through the provision of stable and clear contracts of employment reflective of the hours worked, rather than utilising insecure contracts such as zero hours, where they are not wanted.

A reduced reliance on overtime and provision of set hours which accurately reflect hours regularly worked also adds towards job security. All employers are encouraged to offer staff who work for them for a prolonged period the opportunity to become direct employees.

Additionally, employers should also seek to develop staff skills internally, minimising the need for external contracted expertise which is often at a higher cost.

Help to achieve this is available from the following resources:

- CIPD Knowledge Hub – Tackling in Work Poverty
- CIPD Knowledge Hub – Employer/Employee views of zero hours contracts

Accreditations that support this charter element:

- Living Wage Foundation – The Real Living Wage
- Living Wage Foundation – Living Hours
- Living Wage Foundation – Living Pension

2. Employee Voice and Good Employee Relations

Good Employee Relations Fostered with Recognised Trade Unions

Collective bargaining and regular constructive dialogue between employers and trade unions is important to ensure good employment relations and safe workplaces.

It helps facilitate mutually beneficial adjustments to employment practices, and to ensure high-quality service delivery.

Employers are encouraged to recognise and work with trade unions. Creating a regular dialogue with recognised unions and informing staff when they commence employment of their ability to join the union.

Union recognition can help organisations to hear the collective voice of their employees and be aware of wider national impacts that may affect the workforce.

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Help to achieve this is available from the following resources:

- ACAS Advice – Trade Union Recognition in the Workplace
- CIPD Knowledge Hub – Employee Engagement Factsheet

Other standards and schemes available to assist you with your journey:

- CBI/TUC Good Business Charter

3. Health, Safety and Wellbeing

Development and delivery of a workplace approach covering all aspects of health, safety and wellbeing is a key tool to any organisation. Employers should take steps to ensure that they are fostering good health, safety and wellbeing.

Planning should include thinking of how to promote and embed health, safety and wellbeing within the culture of the organisation.

Step methodologies for both include:

- Health and Safety (Plan, Do, Act, Check)
- Wellbeing (Connect, Take Notice, Give, Be Active, Keep Learning)

Organisations may look to implement and encourage the use of Wellness Action plans or Wellbeing or Inclusion Passports. These are useful tools that can support positive conversations between employees and their managers.

Health and Safety

High standards of health and safety at work with clear and relevant health and safety policies, risk assessments and training for all areas should be delivered by organisations.

Employers should provide a healthy and supportive environment and make appropriate and reasonable adjustments for people working and using their organisation.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) have some Health and safety basics for organisations which can be found here on its website.

They also have an introduction to managing health and safety which will help organisations to decide where they need to do more and ensure they plan, monitor and review their control measures.

Physical Health

Employers should promote healthy and sustainable routes to work such as use of walking, cycling and public transport. They can also provide financial benefits for staff e.g. cycle to work schemes, gym membership discount schemes etc.

Workplaces can encourage physically active meetings, such as walking meetings. Employers can also encourage physical activity whilst travelling to and from work and during breaks from work. Healthy food options can be promoted and provided within the organisation.

Employers should also ensure that meal breaks are taken.

3. Health, Safety and Wellbeing ctd.

Mental Health

Employers should promote good mental health, create safe spaces and adopt practical initiatives such as staff support networks and mental health first aiders.

Access can be provided to employee assistance programmes e.g. with counselling schemes, signpost to health advice and local support services e.g. Credit Unions/Citizens Advice etc. Help to achieve this is available from the following resources:

- HSE – Health and Safety Basics for Business
- Mind Business Resources
- Mental Health First Aid England
- CIPD Knowledge Hub
- ACAS – Health and Wellbeing advice
- Gallup – Five Essential Elements of Wellbeing
- New Economics Foundation Five Ways to Wellbeing

Other standards and schemes available to assist you with your journey:

- Investors in People Wellbeing Award
- Health@work – Workplace Wellbeing Charter

4. Flexibility, Diversity and Equality

Flexibility

Employers should embrace flexible working as this will help more people to access the labour market and stay in work, supporting enhanced employee engagement and wellbeing.

Employers should encourage applications for flexible working requests in line with legislation and where possible accommodate these requests in line with business needs.

Vacant roles can be advertised noting a willingness to accept requests of this nature during the initial recruitment process.

Employers should provide flexibility for those who require it where possible, on the premise that motivated employees with a good work life balance will be more productive and committed to the organisation.

Diversity and Equality

Employers should remove barriers to equal access to quality work through inclusive recruitment practices and making reasonable adjustments where required.

It is important to have a clear advertised commitment to a diverse workplace reflective of our local community, free from harassment and discrimination, and have policies or procedures in place to deal with any such issues that arise.

Equality Diversity and Inclusion training for staff and leaders is also important in an organisation to ensure a positive customer as well as employee experience, free from bias.

Employers should foster an inclusive business culture where diversity issues are discussed via an appropriate forum, such as employee networks, and where required, resulting actions are taken to increase inclusivity.

Help to achieve this is available from the following resources:

- CIPD Knowledge Hub – Flexible and Hybrid Working
- CIPD Knowledge Hub – Inclusion and Diversity in the Workplace
- ACAS – Improving Equality Diversity and Inclusion in your Workplace

Other standards and schemes available to assist you with your journey:

- The Disability Confident Employer Scheme, Hidden Disabilities
- Sunflower Stonewall Diversity Champions Award
- The TUC Dying to Work Charter for terminally ill employees

5. Development and Fulfilment

Development

We encourage employers to sign up to the Lancashire Skills Pledge. By becoming involved, businesses can gain a better understanding of their workforce and skills needs. By providing placement opportunities employers can develop the management skills of their current workforce, as well as improve their recruitment process by accessing a pool of students who offer enthusiasm and fresh perspectives to the business.

There are nine different pledges that employers can choose from, and they can choose as many pledges as they like. Businesses can also enhance their public profile by supporting the local community as well as helping to build strong relationships with a local university, college or school and the Job Centre.

Equal opportunities for learning should be offered to all employees to aid career progression, development of skills through support of recognised qualifications, apprenticeships and graduateships as well as other relevant initiatives.

Employers should focus on assisting employees in entering professions and developing and retaining their skills for the future through the utilisation of local educational establishments to increase levels of skills within workforces to NVQ level 4 (degree level) and above to address low skills levels and retain and grow local talent. Clear performance management processes should be in place to assist with skills development and business succession planning.

Fulfilment

Drawing on the power of community, positive wider societal contribution to aid fulfilment at work should be advocated, such as volunteering and sharing of resources where appropriate for the greater good of the district. The Lancashire Skills Pledge includes pledges for helping to get young people work ready, becoming an enterprise advisor, and supporting care leavers.

By using procurement and purchasing power, businesses can support local social enterprises and third sector organisations. Businesses can also support charities and third sector organisations in a variety of ways from financial support to providing their expertise pro bono.

Businesses should consider the benefits of wider corporate social responsibility in attracting staff and consider impacts of business activity on climate change. A focus Lancaster District Fair Work Charter on what part can be played in carbon reduction within daily working activities and sustainable working practices is encouraged.

Help to achieve this is available from the following resources:

- Lancashire Skills Pledge
- The National Apprenticeships Service
- University of Cumbria – Higher Level Apprenticeships
- Lancaster University – Employer Engagement Team
- Lancaster District CVS – Volunteer Centre
- The National Apprenticeships Service
- Lancaster and Morecambe College
- Bay volunteers
- Carbon Trust – Business Carbon Footprint Calculator

Other standards and schemes available to assist you with your journey:

- Carbon Literacy Project

5. Development and Fulfilment ctd.

Assessment Process

We want to encourage all employers within the Lancaster district to start on their Fair Work Charter journey. There are three tiers of membership levels within the Charter – Supporter, Member, and Ambassador.

We also recognise that some employers will already meet the criteria to become a Member or Ambassador of the Fair Work Charter and others will be taking their first steps to become a Supporter.

Wherever employers are on their journey, they can be part of the Lancaster District Fair Work Charter.

If businesses wish to apply, they will receive a short self-assessment questionnaire for them to complete and return, along with supporting evidence. This will help businesses to see where they are on their journey and help us to identify how we can support them and the next steps they could take.

Once we receive this completed form, we will assess their membership against each of the five elements. We will then contact the business to advise them of their membership level and ongoing support that will be relevant to them.

The business will also be provided with their scores in each of the five elements, this will enable them to continue on their journey. This information will be used to target support and training opportunities in the Charter elements that businesses do not yet meet.

Businesses will need to meet all of the criteria under each element to be awarded the relevant Charter status of Supporter, Member or Ambassador.

Businesses will also be invited to join the Lancaster District Fair Work Charter network with other employers on their Fair Work journey.

This will provide opportunities to share good practice, undertake joint training and provide support to each other.

What This Means For...

	Supporters	Members	Ambassador
Fair Pay and Job Security	<p>Identify employees who are paid below the Real Living Wage and develop an action plan to work towards paying this.</p> <p>Working towards the provision of stable and clear employment contracts.</p>	<p>Pay Real Living Wage or above to all employees (excluding apprentices).</p> <p>No zero-hour contracts for employees, unless requested by them.</p> <p>Provision of set hours which accurately reflect the hours regularly worked.</p>	<p>Ensure third party contracted staff are paid the Real Living Wage.</p> <p>Offer staff who work for them for prolonged periods the opportunity to become direct employees</p>
Employee Voice and Good Employee Relations	<p>Commitment to embed a culture of engagement and consultation with staff.</p>	<p>Evidence of staff engagement opportunities and consultation.</p> <p>Evidence that staff are informed of their right to join a Trade Union</p>	<p>Employee Recognition scheme in operation.</p>
Healthy, Safe Workplaces	<p>Commitment to develop a workplace wellbeing approach.</p> <p>Meet legislative requirements relating to health and safety at work.</p>	<p>Evidence of the promotion of physical health.</p> <p>Procedures in place to learn from issues that have arisen.</p>	<p>Wellness Action Plans or Wellbeing/Inclusion passports utilised with staff.</p>
Flexibility, Diversity and Equality	<p>Meet legislative requirements for flexible working requests.</p> <p>Commitment to work towards inclusive recruitment practices.</p>	<p>Evidence of flexible working being embraced and providing flexibility for staff who require it where possible.</p> <p>Advertise roles that note a willingness to accept flexible working requests.</p>	<p>Development of inclusive leadership within the organisation.</p>
Development and Fulfilment	<p>Commitment to staff development.</p>	<p>Lancashire Skills Pledge signatory.</p> <p>Evidence of opportunities for staff to develop their skills.</p> <p>Apprenticeship opportunities.</p> <p>Contributing to the local community.</p>	<p>Clear performance management processes in place to assist with skills development and business succession planning.</p> <p>Evidence of wider corporate social responsibility and a Carbon Reduction Plan in place.</p>

Begin Your Journey

To begin your Fair Work Charter Journey, scan the QR code below to complete a self-assessment form or email business.support@lancaster.gov.uk to be sent a link to the form.

